

12 December 2020

The Honorable Paul G. Gardephe
United States District Judge
Southern District of New York
Thurgood Marshall Courthouse
40 Foley Square
New York, NY 1007

Re: Case 1:16 cr-00800-PGG

Dear Judge Gardephe;

The supplemental letter of the Prosecutor dated November 19, 2020 was recently received by me and I wish to reply to it to the best of my ability. Firstly, I believe it is a matter of professional courtesy when writing correspondence mentioning the names of various individuals to refer to them by their proper name. My name is Lawrence Lester I'm also known as Mr. Lester but I seldom answer to the utterance "Lester". As a matter of professional courtesy, I would hope the prosecutor would remember this and refer to me by my name, rather than using it in a demeaning way.

Your Honor and all involved in this matter know, I am not an attorney. You also know that I have never been involved in a criminal proceeding. I have been engaged in business matters that involved attorneys and have some knowledge of what I might expect from a professional hired to assist my position. In those matters, that did not involve the destruction of my life, the attorneys acted with professionalism. I also know that I asked a man who claimed to have 40 years' experience of the law, to assist me with defense against a claim that I had willingly been engaged in a crime.

I am one of the 98 percent of people "processed" by the system and by lawyers who failed their sacred duties. However, unlike Edwards and others in this case, I am innocent of all claims against me. Not one hour has gone by since that morning in 2015 when FBI agents banged on my door, put a gun to my neck and proudly announced I was under arrest. My family has suffered, my children and wife live in shame, my income possibilities have been destroyed, my health has been damaged, my freedom has been taken from me for over five years and all because someone did not carefully check the "evidence". The government knows that there is not a single email or statement I made that was not at the behest of or a repeat of instructions/information from those who I absolutely believed were authorities of the agencies named. Had those agents spent a little more time and sought me out, I could have helped them capture

Edwards and recover all of the stolen money. Instead at least two innocent people have been branded felon, no money has been recovered, Edwards and his team live in luxury and without fear. Now the government is asking that my claim of ineffective counsel be denied because I am not a lawyer and do not have the training or knowledge of law to "properly" present a claim against the abject failure of one who contracted to protect.

Unlike normal statistics found in the natural world, business, card games, chess or any game of chance, the Justice system is unique. Unique in that it is a machine that processes people and their lives with an exceptionally high degree of success. Few, if any, statistician could explain the performance of this system. They call this system "Justice". How is justice possible if the lawyer, sworn to defend his client, is not willing to learn any facts from his client or from the "evidence". The legal establishment is well aware of this, yet any claim to seek truth is met with fierce opposition from those sworn to find and defend it.

The prosecutor states that Mr. Cohen met with me and duly examined the discovery with me. What is not stated is that the meeting was at my repeated insistence and demand. Nor does it mention the fact that Mr. Cohen told me this was the very first time he had ever had such a meeting with the client. As mentioned above, in my previous dealings with attorneys, all have met with me and have spent whatever time needed to learn the facts of my position. Thus, the actions or lack of by Mr. Cohen cause me to assert my claim of poor performance.

At the October 2017 meeting, he had in his office a portable disk drive which appeared to contain copies of my computer files. When I asked Mr. Cohen to help me open those files on his computer, he did not want to do that. He told me his computer has client data and he could not use it to view files. However, he did give me the drive which I took home. Unfortunately, the files contained on that drive were some type of image unusable to me. Without the required software, the files were simply a mass of data nearly impossible to process or catalog. I did learn that software to process the image file was available, but Mr. Cohen's secretary told me they did not have it available.

The only "evidence" we reviewed at the meeting was a recording of a conversation between Rachel Gendreau, an unknown person with an oriental accent and a government under-cover person. I do not know how he received that recording. In the conversation, Rachel Gendreau made statements which were not correct. Mr. Cohen told me that Rachel was "toast" and that he knew that from his original conversations with her. He told me that her guilt was certain and that, as a result, I too faced 20 years in prison. He was unable to open any other files other than a few PDF files that had no bearing on our discussion. None of those files had been authored or transmitted by me. Based on those documents, Mr. Cohen told me the government would prevail and I would go to prison for many years. Our meeting began at approximately 11am and Mr. Cohen sent me back to my hotel about 1pm. When I met him the following day, we had less than one hour of actual meeting time. During that time Mr. Cohen took a number of phone calls from potential clients which interfered with our time. He then showed me a book of sentencing guidelines. During the remaining 40 or so minutes he explained to me that if I went to trial and lost, I was going to go to jail for a number of years. I was told

New York juries side with the government and that since I was accused of conspiracy there would be no way around that. I asked how I could conspire if I did not know a crime was underway. How could I forge documents I did not create? How could I conspire with people, namely Jacobs, whom I had refused to speak to for over six years? He told me that I would never overcome conspiracy. At no time during that meeting or any time during the course of our relationship did Mr. Cohen ever review any exculpatory factual evidence and he made it clear to me that he did not wish to do so.

I have never seen any factual evidence of my guilt or any documents to support my guilt. I asked Mr. Cohen for such documents so we could refute them. The reason he did not show me factual evidence is because there is none. It is difficult for me to understand how Mr. Cohen, or any other person, could say that a meeting, that lasted less than 2 1/2 hours could fully and carefully review the facts of this or any other case. I recall the prosecutor claimed that he intended to present over 40,000 documents and would take four weeks of trial. If Mr. Cohen reviewed five documents with me that had nothing to do with me whatsoever, how does that become a full investigation of fact? If Mr. Cohen had evidence of guilt in his possession, why didn't he show it to me as I requested on numerous occasions?

Despite not having proper software and being told by Mr. Cohen's secretary that they did not have it either. I was able to recover and sort a large number of emails that would assist Mr. Cohen in the case. These files came from CDs that had been given me earlier. I sent these to him via cloud storage, he never downloaded any of those files. If one looks at the recovered emails of Edwards, it is abundantly clear that he was tricking me and conspiring with others to hide the truth of the crime from me. During the year 2015 when the Cities Project was underway, I received the majority of instruction and documents from the attorney known as Brian Pierce. The true identity of this person is unknown to me, but he was introduced to me and presented his credentials of authority and he was my liaison with the Federal Reserve. Seldom did I correspond with Edwards, but it is clear he was engaged without my knowledge. Pierce kept in communication with me after my arrest advising me that the matter was a mistake, that I was in fact engaged in official business and that all would be dismissed. That communication continued until May or June of 2016, when it suddenly ceased. It was also clear that Edwards had used my name to convince people to invest money with fraudulent emails he or his associates sent, bearing my name using fake email credentials. When I pointed this out to Mr. Cohen, he dismissed it. I was given the clear impression that he did not have time to study the case and was simply going forward with the idea of a plea. I have not been able to reconstruct emails from my Comcast mail account. I could not find them on the CDs and when my computer was returned the mail files were missing. Without those files and a complete review of documents from 2011 through 2016, including letters and documents from the Federal Reserve and other officials and agencies, mounting a defense was an impossible task.

The 19 November 2020 letter claims that a memo created by Mr. Cohen on 11 November 2017 clearly showed that I was guilty of a crime and should plead so. Interestingly, I have shown that letter to other non-lawyers; each of whom have

commented they suspect the memo was sourced from some communication that Mr. Cohen received from the government. I refuted each and every statement of that document and could have supported all denial with documentary proof. Mr. Cohen told me he did not need to read my support in order to make a defense, that his expertise would suffice. I was amazed by his arrogance then, and remain amazed after seeing it restated in the 19 November 2020 letter. It may be true that Mr. Cohen has practiced law for over 40 years. That does not mean that he actively worked on my behalf to defend me from an illegitimate prosecution.

I have never seen any discovery document from the government, not one page of any form of discovery or evidence has been given to me by anyone. I did see a copy of some of the grand jury testimony, which is resplendent with untruths and myth. I was sent a newspaper article and read internet articles of the case, each resplendent with unproven allegations and grandiose comment. In the November 19 letter it is stated that I have not given any exculpatory evidence. The evidence the government mentions is the thousands of emails and official documents sent to me by Edwards and by people purporting to be Federal Reserve, US treasury, IMF directors, bankers and other government parties fully authorized by those agencies, extending over a seven-year period of time. All of those documents are in the custody of the government. Since I do not have those files, the demand that I furnish them is pointless. I understand that it is the job of the prosecutor to seek the truth. That is exactly what I am asking for.

Mr. Cohen failed me in his duty to uncover the truth, by his refusal to perform his sacred duty, his client has suffered grave harm to his person and to his family. I am accused of mail fraud and forgery. In order to prove otherwise to a jury, it is logical to assume that the defense should have access to and full knowledge of the documents of guilt. I understand there are certain latitudes in that afforded the prosecutor, that worries me not. However, it is inconceivable to envision that an attorney, with no knowledge of fact, no documents of defense and only his "expertise" could mount any form of defense against a 40 thousand document presentation. One would assume that a 40-year veteran of the legal trade would clearly know that he would need hard evidence of rebuttal and that knowledge is not gained via a 2.5-hour meeting and review of a document and recording that have nothing to do with the client. Worse yet, that such attorney would base his entire assumptions on his belief that a third party was "toast". The government has had access to the entire file of exculpatory documents and, to my knowledge, did not disclose that information to Mr. Cohen. Further I have no knowledge of any action or request by Mr. Cohen for delivery of such documents or evidence.

Mr. Cohen had access to witnesses consisting of city and township officials, bankers and lawyers who were prepared to provide information to assist him. He refused to contact any of those people. Each of these people had firsthand knowledge of the claims of Edwards and had dealt with him. Each would have been able to help paint the proper picture of how masterful a criminal is Edwards. None of those people would state that I was a cohort of Edwards or had lied to them.

From our first conversation, I had asked Mr. Cohen to recover computers taken from my residence since they contained all of my emails and letters without which we could not

effectively argue against the allegations made against me. At court, Mr. Cohen made feeble references to this and each time he was given a new excuse and did not follow through. Thus, my computers were not returned to me until long after I had pled guilty of a crime. The fact is that, upon investigation of the files contained on the CDs, it is clear that those computers were fully image copied by the FBI in Jan-March of 2016. It is also clear that Mr. Cohen did not wish to discuss with me the fact that documents taken from my home and computers belonging to my wife, which were not evidence, should have been returned.

The letter references a meeting between me and Mr. Sean Buckley. That meeting was held in the offices of an attorney in Houston Texas. The third attorney was in the room for the entire meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to engage the services of Mr. Buckley as lead counsel to defend me in this matter. In that meeting I made it perfectly clear that I did not knowingly engage in a criminal activity and that my attorney of record was not helping in my defense. I explained to Mr. Buckley that there were thousands of documents to process and that none of them would prove my willing involvement in a crime. Mr. Buckley agreed that the first step would be to look at the evidence against me and then to sit with him to go over rebuttal of each claim using documents in my computer. He told me that this would be expensive. Unfortunately, Mr. Buckley was unable to assist due to his involvement in another case in Houston, but promised his support if his case could conclude as scheduled. By the time Mr. Buckley was clear of that matter, Mr. Cohen had convinced me that I must file a guilty plea. I still believed that Mr. Buckley could help and I corresponded with him regularly to see if I could obtain his services to withdraw the guilty plea and go to trial. Mr. Buckley could not see his way clear to defend me for financial reasons. Eventually my son engaged Mr. Buckley to assist and oversee the actions of Mr. Cohen with respect to sentencing. When I contacted Mr. Buckley about that matter, I told him that I was innocent. Mr. Buckley promptly told me that he had been hired to assist with sentencing and that if I continued to make claims of innocence, he would hang up the phone. From that date until the sentencing hearing I did not speak to Mr. Buckley.

Regarding waiver of conflict. At the time I waived conflict, Mr. Cohen was telling me that we were going to fight and win and that I could believe in him as my protector. I felt he was truthful and that he was going to take all necessary actions to clear my name. It was shortly after the waiver was filed that his demeanor changed and he began to claim that a guilty plea was a good idea. This before we had reviewed any documents or had any detailed conversations regarding the case. Within the next few months and with no work in progress, it became clear to me that I was not being properly defended and I asked him to give me back my money, he refused.

With respect to the claim that I freely admitted guilt in a proffer session. That is incorrect. I agreed to the meeting because I understood, as did my wife from her conversation with Mr. Cohen, that the purpose was to review the case in an informal setting. I was led to understand that the purpose of the meeting was to go over the matter in detail and that upon learning the true facts, the charges would be dropped. Instead, when the meeting began, I was asked to admit guilt and I refused. I was told certain untruths and I refuted

them. After a time, a meeting between Mr. Cohen and the prosecutor was held in the hallway. After which Mr. Cohen came into the room and told me I must admit guilt. I refused. It was finally agreed that I would tell them that I may have suspected a problem in Oct or November of 2015 and failed to notify the FBI. That was in fact not true and the documents of exculpatory evidence of that period of time prove it. These documents were never reviewed by Mr. Cohen. I followed Mr. Cohen because I was in a trap and the door was closing fast. No money to hire another attorney, refusal by the public defender to speak to me and no knowledge of the system. I now know more but I am still not a lawyer. However, I know the facts behind my involvement with the Cities Project and the evidence that Mr. Cohen told me proving my guilt simply could not exist.

It is stated that I freely pleaded guilty. Please check the record carefully, at the guilty plea, I told Judge Gardephe that I suspected. That was not a true statement, but I saw no other way to say guilty of something. My state of mind at that time was to keep from fainting. When the Judge asked me follow up questions, I gave him the answers he wanted with the understanding that I was doing the right thing and that Mr. Cohen would interject if I was entrapping myself. Mr. Cohen said nothing, so I assumed that the Judge knew I had only admitted to suspicion.

At sentencing Judge Gardephe said I knew, how did he know that? Did he think I lied to him? If His Honor had access to the documents Mr. Cohen failed to provide the Court, he could never have made such a statement. Yes, I had told him what he wanted to hear, but I did not lie. When I heard the Judge make that statement I started to respond and was kicked under the table. Again, Mr. Cohen said nothing.

Everyone in this case knows that I'm not a lawyer, I've asked the court to assist me so that I could have proper representation to refute the allegations against me and to clear my name. In the November letter it is stated that I have not provided evidence regarding Mr. Cohen's prejudice and predetermined belief in my guilt. Each time I spoke with him about guilt he would remind me of how Gendreau had made untruthful statements and how others had stolen money and how those activities, by some magical theory, made me guilty. Of course, it would take hours to go over all of the emails sent to me over a period of seven to eight years which would clearly prove deceit by Edwards and his team and my ignorance of the crime. Much simpler to use the theory that others did something so, you are guilty. The prosecutor said it would take four weeks to go over the alleged evidence. Mr. Cohen claimed he could argue the case without speaking to me about any of the documents the prosecutor was to submit.

How could Mr. Cohen tell the Court that he provided efficient counsel when the correspondence between he and I clearly shows that I have never stated guilt to him while he continued to push for me to admit guilt. Clearly, we had a serious difference of opinion, but unfortunately only one of us has to pay the bill for that conflict. When I filed an appeal, I asked Mr. Cohen to simply admit that perhaps there were facts that needed review and that he could help me in the appeal to win back my honor. Instead of making a simple admission, (which lawyers can write in ways that make all look normal), Mr. Cohen took an aggressive stand against me with the court and filed motions to have himself removed as my attorney. In business, one completes their contract, or makes

some effort to rectify shortcomings. Apparently, in Mr. Cohen's rules for the practice of law, it is perfectly acceptable to take thousands of dollars from a person, call them a client, and then dump them by making it impossible for them to take any course other than a guilty plea.

Even if Mr. Cohen were to step forward and spend the time required to carefully review seven years of correspondence wherein, I was lied to on a regular basis and fed counterfeit documents and instructions, all of which I believed to be authentic; I would not go to trial with him. My belief in the validity of those documents, persons and correspondence caused me to give Edwards over 2.8 million dollars and to spend my time pursuing matters I believed were going to benefit our country. When asked by the Court how or why I had given Edwards such money, Mr. Cohen stammered, attempted to cover his lack of knowledge and dismiss the question. The fact is that Mr. Cohen had no idea of how Edwards had extracted those funds from me. If Mr. Cohen had such extensive knowledge of me, how could he not know such a simple fact. I would suspect the Mr. Cohen cannot tell the Court how or under what circumstances I met Edwards, nor could he explain the other group of actors involved. Mr. Cohen told me that he was an advocate for the innocent and that he was a formidable foe in open court. All saw the actions of this man in the courtroom, it is doubtful that anyone present would categorize them as "formidable".

Since the Prosecutor is the only party in these proceedings with complete and accurate files, if I am to provide the court with exculpatory evidence, the only source of that documentation is the Prosecutor. If the Court wishes to review such documentation, I respectfully request that the Prosecutor provide the Court with all exculpatory evidence in their possession. Further that they provide all "evidence" that Mr. Cohen claims was shown to me. If the Prosecutor prefers that I provide this evidence, which he clearly possesses, it is imperative that the missing Comcast email account and related documents be available. Comcast will not provide that data to me. Therefore; I request that he instruct Comcast to re-construct my email files that were contained in the account that are missing from my computer. These messages and the account contain much of the documentation requested in the 19 November letter. Without that action, I am severely limited in my ability to fully provide the thousands of emails that fit that description.

I apologize to the Court for the length of this letter. I hope that we can all agree that Mr. Cohen could have taken another pathway in my defense and that as a result, the truth has not been seen. I respectfully request that Your Honor allow this matter to continue so that I might finally meet with the Prosecutor to restore my honor.

Respectfully,



Lawrence Lester

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